

# Michigan United Conservation Clubs

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*Uniting Citizens  
to Conserve,  
Protect, and  
Enhance  
Michigan's  
Natural  
Resources and  
Outdoor Heritage*

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MUCC appreciates the sentiment behind the House forestry package bill and supports encouraging more timber production on both state and private lands, but does not think this package reaches that goal. We hope to be able to work with both the House and the Senate to create a package that promotes sustainable forests and a strong timber industry in Michigan while maintaining the Certification we recently reached at great expense to our taxpayers.

MUCC supports HB 5454, 5455

MUCC opposes HB 5628, 5453, 5457, 5458, 5462

HB 5628 as written diverts approximately \$4.4 million dollars out of the DNR's Forest Management Fund as a stick to push them to cut more timber on state forest lands. This money would go to local units of government and the School Aid Fund and would be in addition to HB 5462's requirement that calls for the general fund to pay into the School Aid Fund the amount lost through the tax reduction for private forest lands. Not only are we very opposed to taking natural resource dollars and diverting them to non-natural resource related items, we also believe this funding diversion is counter productive.

Requiring the DNR to cut more timber to make up for a loss in their budget goes against the principles behind Forest Certification we recently achieved. We all want the DNR to encourage more timber harvest on state land, in a sustainable manner. If we strip their budget they will have fewer resources to make that happen. What is meant as a stick for the DNR becomes a punishment for Michigan's timber industry.

Also important to note – another purpose of the forestry package is to get more timber on the market in order to reduce its cost and make Michigan more competitive in the forestry market. Reducing the cost of timber also reduces the amount the DNR will make. They need approximately \$32 million annually from the Forest Development Fund to meet their budget. Reducing the value of state timber while also stripping dollars from the Forest Management Fund is a double blow to the DNR's forest management budget. And any excess dollars in the fund should be directed toward activities designed to promote sustainable forests.

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HB 5453 implies that limiting factors are the reason why more state forest land is not in production. Whether you call them limiting factors or not, there are reasons why certain state forest lands cannot be harvested in a certain year of entry. We are likely to get into a game of words if we don't acknowledge that there are legitimate reasons why timber might not be available for harvest in any one year. Extraneous reporting requirements are waste of time and dollars that could be spent on forest management, both in creating new tools and time in the field.

MUCC appreciates the edit in the substitute for HB 5454 that clearly defines access on lands that are contiguous only at a point. With the definition change we are supportive of HB 5454 and HB5455. We are also supportive of HB 5456.

MUCC also likes the sentiment behind HB 5457, 5458 and 5462 because it provides incentives for active forest management by private landowners. MUCC Resolution 25 of 2005 requests that private forest lands be taxed more like agricultural lands and this legislation promotes that goal. However, we are unable to support the substitutes because the bill requires that the Department of Agriculture be the one to approve the forest management plans. It is a waste of Michigan's resources to start a new program in the Department of Agriculture when the DNR already has an active program in place. In tight budgetary times we must get rid of overlapping programs, not create more.

MUCC would like to thank the Conservation, Forestry and Outdoor Recreation Committee for all their hard work on these bills. We continue to be interested in helping to create a package of bills that promotes active, sustainable, economically productive forest management programs.

Yours in Conservation,

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